

Amendments to the Claims:

This listing of claims will replace all prior versions, and listings, of claims in the application:

Listing of Claims:

1. (Currently Amended) Root canal instrument (1), which includes a metallic needle part (3) for working the tooth and a gripping end (2) attached to the upper end of the needle part to serve as a handle to be gripped by fingers of a user, wherein the outer surface of the gripping end (2) is substantially continuous, ~~that~~ the coefficient of friction of at least the material used in the outer surface of the gripping end is higher than 0.4, determined as a coefficient of kinetic friction and with steel as a material pair, and ~~that~~ the hardness and thickness of at least the material used in the outer surface of the gripping end ~~as well as the thickness of this material layer~~ are so chosen that the shape of the gripping end (2) is recoverably deformable ~~between fingers~~ by a force applied by the gripping fingers.
2. (Cancelled)
3. (Previously Presented) Root canal instrument according to claim 1, wherein the aforesaid coefficient of friction of the material of the outer surface of the gripping end (2) is within the range of about 0.5...0.8.

4. (Previously Presented) Root canal instrument according to claim 1, wherein the gripping end (2) is made of a homogeneous material.
5. (Previously Presented) Root canal instrument according to claim 1, wherein the gripping end (2), or at least its surface layer, is made of an elastomer having a hardness in the range of 10...95 Shore A.
6. (Previously Presented) Root canal instrument according to claim 1, wherein the gripping end (2) has a surface layer (9), under which there is at least one layer of some other material.
7. (Previously Presented) Root canal instrument according to claim 6, wherein the said surface layer (9) is thin and has a lower hardness than the hardness of the other portion of said gripping end (2).
8. (Previously Presented) Root canal instrument according to claim 3, wherein said coefficient of friction of the material of the outer surface of the gripping end (2) is within the range of 0.7...0.8.
9. (Previously Presented) Root canal instrument according to claim 5, wherein the gripping end (2), or at least its surface layer, is made of an elastomer having a hardness in the range of 30...95 Shore A.
10. (Previously Presented) Root canal instrument according to claim 5, wherein the gripping end (2), or at least its surface layer, is made of an elastomer having a hardness in the range of 50...85 Shore A.

11. (Previously Presented) Root canal instrument according to claim 5, wherein the gripping end (2), or at least its surface layer, is made of an elastomer having a hardness in the range of 60...70 Shore A.
12. (Previously Presented) Root canal instrument according to claim 7, wherein said surface layer (9) has a lower hardness than the hardness of the other portion of said gripping end (2) by 5...10 units Shore A.